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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, last week I was fuming over my problems with my desktop peecee. I did manage to resolve the printer problems. I brought the machine back to the dealer and they eventually resolved my floppy drive problem (bad cable, somehow). But, when I got it home, the floppy drive didn't work again. This weekend, I plan to take it apart again and hopefully find that it's just a loose cable and I can get it going again. There's no way I want to walk into that shop again with my tower under my arm!

Slowly, I'm rebuilding the system back up again. Essentially I have to re-load everything that will not run from where it currently resides on the drive. Fortunately, all of my data files and other non-program files are intact, for the most part. It's a matter of moving stuff around and deleting corrupted files as I replace them. One major pain. I have the CD-burner working, so you can bet that I'll be saving a LOT of stuff to CDs!

I'm ready for Spring! I'm now officially sick of the snow and cold temperatures for this year! I can take it for awhile, but then I start thinking of warmer weather. I wonder if receiving gardening catalogs has anything to do with it! I'm ready to go but apparently nature won't accommodate me! Hmmm, I wonder how Puxatawney Phil made out on GroundHog Day (as I write this a day early!). Six more weeks of winter?

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, it's a heck of a thing, but another week has come and gone. The weeks just seem to fly by these days. It must be a sign that I'm getting older. Nah, can't be. <grin>

Those of you who read this column regularly know that I'm always talking about how we're going to hell in a handbasket and that society is doomed because people are getting more and more stupid. I often use the proliferation of Intel based computers and the voters of Palm Beach county as examples.

Well, this week the world went out of its way to prove my point. I ordered some things online and had them shipped the most cost-effective way. The most cost-effective way just happened to be UPS.

Unfortunately, the vendor decided to require a signature (stupid choice number one, since the total cost including shipping was under $25.00). Since both my wife and I work there was no one here to sign for the parcel. I filled in the portion of the note left by UPS to ask that the parcel be re-routed to my father-in-law's house, since he's retired and usually at home during the day. This is something that UPS allows for, and shouldn't be a problem.

The following day, there was no sign of any kind that UPS had been back to our house, so I fully expected to get a call on the third day from my father-in-law, telling me that the package had arrived.

Much to my surprise, I arrived home on the third day to find a "final delivery attempt" note from UPS. "The parcel will be returned to the sender within the next five days" was the message. Now I have to take time off of work to take care of their screw-up, and probably lose more money in salary than the parcel is worth. But that, as they say, is life.

I know, I know. These people are under a lot of pressure. I know several people who work for UPS, and they're always under the gun. But let's face it... now I have to basically do their job because someone else messed up.

I hate to single out the good folks at UPS because most of the time they do an outstanding job and I've got a lot of respect for both the company and the employees, and mistakes can indeed happen anywhere. But this is the most recent example, so it stands out in my mind.

Ever since the first of our ancestors discovered that you could make tools and prevail over nature instead of the other way around, evolution stopped being what nature had intended. Well kiddies, it's time to skim the gene pool.

We all feel that way sometimes, I guess. Each generation thinks that the following generation is going to destroy everything that the older generation has accomplished. It's been said that Socrates thought that of Plato's generation, and Plato's generation thought it of Aristotle's generation. I don't personally believe that, but the fact that it's said at all proves my point.

So if the belief that things are "going to hell" is simply a by-product of an aging generation, then I'm simply a victim of society. Ain't it funny how _I_ am a VICTIM of society and everyone else is the problem??? Gawd, I AM getting old. <grin>

Well, enough of this. Time for the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

'Chris' asks about hard drive size:

"What's the biggest drive I can use with an STe? I've got a 1g and a 500Mb in a case with a CD-ROM. Using HDDriver 7.01 it only sees the 500Mb and CD. Mind you I can't seem to see the 1g on my Falcon so maybe it's knackered?"

’Mark’ tells Chris:

"I could be wrong but I think we have approached this from the wrong end.

When we talk about the limitations on size of partitions we should remember that this is TOS and NOT the driver/partitioning software such as HD driver, ICD, etc. Even if TOS can not use the partitions the software should still see the unit, this is more likely to be a hardware problem.

Ideas could be termination, parity, ID or simply not plugged in properly, there may also be a very small number of STEs around with dodgy DMA chips (very unlikely).

Early TOS could only see up to 16 MB on a partition, later they improved this along with a number of other problems such as folder depth, etc. There are many patches out there but I think that modern drivers such as Hddriver will replace and patch these areas for your (could be wrong).

The type of interface that you are using would be helpful?
Version of HD Driver? TOS Version (maybe)?"

Alyre Chiasson asks about serial ports on the TT:

"I have read that port 2 on the TT can supports speeds up to 56K whereas port 1 cannot. I purchased a 56K modem and hooked it up to port 2. I have tried setting the Sting Port settings to Modem 2 and well as the General Port settings to Modem 2 but they revert back to Modem 1 even after a save. I have also changed the modem reference in the Dial.scr file to Modem 2. All of this results in a failure to connect with the modem. Anyone get this combination to work or can suggest what I should change? By the way, it does work on port 1 but at a slower speed - in other words the modem is okay."

Dan (The Man) Ackerman tells Alyre:

"Use Serial 2 if you can, if you have a video card installed and lost the ports go to a good electronics store and get a 9 pin serial port back plane adaptor and hook it back up. You’ll be much happier.

And if STiNG continues to give you problems with it, I can suggest you try STiK2 as I use a 56k modem on my serial2 port with a dte of 230k everyday on my TT with STiK2. But then again I think that my machine is very similar to one of the programmers machines."

Jerry Martin asks about converting GEM metafiles:

"I have been banging my head against a brick wall lately. It appears the GEM-Metafile format exists in two formats: one supported by the Likes of ArtWorx and Calamus, and another supposedly the ’GEM standard’ which is supported by Papyrus, Gemgraph and others.

The files show colour loss when imported across the ’boundary’ - Papyrus shows ArtWorx/Kandinsky metafiles as only black and white, while GemGraph files import with the colours all messed up into ArtWorx/Kandinsky.

This is a horrific situation.

As the image data is all intact, the only problem seems to be in colour mapping, definition.

I guess it wouldn’t really be too difficult to produce a converter which would alter the colour values appropriately?

Anyone out there want to take up the challenge?

This really is an unacceptable situation, and a program of this ilk would be most appreciated...

It turns out that Rom-Logicware have agreed to look into the possibility of getting ArtWorx compatibility incorporated into Papyrus. Great news!!!

However, the utility might still be very useful. Anyone who wants to include e.g. GemGraph GEM metafiles in Kandinsky/ArtWorx documents (or modify them) will have the same trouble with colours. So there is still a need for this application as a ’first-aid’ patch until the GEM standard can be finally set to rest!

I just want to compliment both Ulli Ramps of Rom-Logicware and Oliver Buchman of ASH for their willingness to help on this! You definitely don’t find this level of support/concern for users on other platforms!"

Steve Sweet looks for a way to sort NewsGroup stuff:

"Does anyone know of an application that will allow me to sort group list from newsgroups servers into alphabetic order?.

When I get the whole list from the IP its all nicely sorted, but as the list gets appended it gets a bit of a mess and can cause some problems.

If there is no specific software to do this then I lay it down as a challenge to the Atari coding fraternity to come up with something.

The interface wont have to be anything special, a TOS windowed prg will do that preferably makes a backup before it gets busy. If you want to get flash then a list that allows deletion of chosen groups and maybe even some search facility would be a nice touch."

Martin Byttebier tells Steve:

"Try a-to-z

A-Z (pronounce A-to-Z) is a GEM program to sort a text file from A to Z (or vice versa). Supports: GEMJing, BubbleGEM, OLGA (Client/Server), ST-Guide and VA_START. Bilingual release (German/English).

The author is Matthias Jaap.

WWW: http://www.penguin.atari-world.com/ "

Bob King asks about keyboards for the Milan:

"Some time ago I mentioned a fault (1s repeating whenever I touched it) on my Milan Keyboard, an NEC. I mentioned this to the service guy in a small computer service shop. 'Oh that's always happening, its your membrane breaking down'. He then went on to describe other symptoms. So I bought a Genius keyboard for ?11.00. Fault cured, much better tactile keys AND a wrist and palm rest. Point of message is to show an often forgotten advantage of Milan --- it's use of standard PC parts. He was able to show me some SCSI cards with the correct chip set, but a bit pricy, so I'll shop around a bit!!

BTW anyone know a program to make the Caps and Num lock LEDs light up, they do work when the keyboard is polled at boot."

Peter Slegg tells Bob:

"My CapsLock LED works ok but the NumLock key is meaningless to TOS since I don't think even the Milan version uses the numerical keypad as cursor keys.

I never understood why this facility is still available on PCs it's just a nuisance. But then we are dealing with the people who added extra keys to use the menu !!!"

Harry Sideras adds:

"... If you use the excellent MenuInfo then you can get a Caps Lock indicator in the menu bar, if that helps..."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sega Dumps the Dreamcast!
Infogrames Closes Hasbro Deal!
Phantasy! Oni! Action Man!
Wireless Playstation?! And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Sega Dumps Flagship Dreamcast Game Machine

Japan’s Sega Corp pulled the plug on its Dreamcast game machine on Wednesday, announcing it would suffer a record loss by ending production of the loss-making console in March in a dramatic refocusing on video game software.

The world’s third-biggest maker of game hardware and software said the shutting down of Dreamcast will generate $689 million in extraordinary losses, leading to a record net in the current year to March 31.

Analysts applauded the end of the 128-bit Dreamcast as a crucial step toward profitability for a company facing four straight years of losses, but they said the size of the special loss was bigger than the 50 billion yen most had expected.

Dreamcast, launched in 1999 equipped with a 56K modem that connected users to games, chatrooms and online tournaments, faced fierce competition from smoother, faster machines rolled out by rivals Sony Corp and Nintendo Co Ltd.

Sega said it would stay in the software business, throwing a lifeline to Sonic the Hedgehog and other characters and games that became synonymous with the world’s first Internet-compatible video game machine.

‘‘The hardware business was becoming a heavy burden to the company," said executive vice president Hideki Sato. ‘‘By shifting away from it and into the software business, where we are stronger, we will aim to get back in the black in the next year."

It accepted 85 billion yen in gift funds from Sega president Isao Okawa to help offset losses.

Operating losses from the hardware division were expected to balloon to 43.5 billion yen in the current business year from 38.4 billion yen a year earlier, the company said, adding that Dreamcast sales fell 44 percent short of an initial goal.

In the business year to March 2000, its hardware division earned 23 percent of total sales and contributed to 95 percent of its total operating loss.

‘‘This is positive in a sense that bleeding is finally going to be staunched," said Hajime Yagi, senior portfolio manager at Meiji Dresdner Asset Management.

Sega said it will now focus on providing game software content and entertainment titles to other video game makers, including Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft Corp, whose new game console system ‘‘XBox" will be launched this fall.

The company also said it agreed with Sony to cooperate in online games and other network-related services.

Sega’s shares have surged 57.9 percent since last week on relief that the company appeared set to cut its losses on Dreamcast and play to its perceived strengths by supplying games to other makers. In the same period, the benchmark Nikkei index slid 1.3 percent.

Sega said it will trim its workforce to the minimum level needed for operating a content business, and would consider cutting back or divesting its European and American operations as well as affiliated enterprises.

It said it expects to sell nine million software titles this business year and boost that by 50 percent next by selling games designed for other machines.

It plans to develop by the end of this year game content for Palm Inc.’s handheld computers, which last year enjoyed a dominant share of more than 70 percent in the fast-growing U.S. hand-held computer market.

Rival game software maker Electronics Arts Inc said that Sega will face a tough struggle to provide software for other platforms, because it would be handicapped by unfamiliarity with the programming requirements of rival consoles and the long development cycle for video games.

‘‘They’re starting from scratch," said John Riccitiello, president and chief executive of EA, which is the top game vendor for Sony’s PlayStation 2 in the U.S.

‘‘It’s not quite as though this is GM saying we’ll make BMWs, but it’s the same kind of proposition," said of the rival gamemaker. ‘‘They may look like BMWs, but I doubt if they’ll drive like BMWs."

Infogrames Completes Hasbro Interactive Acquisition

International computer game publisher Infogrames Entertainment SA today announced the completion of its acquisition of PC game publisher Hasbro Interactive. Infogrames first announced plans to acquire Hasbro Interactive in early December.

The deal, valued at US$100 million, puts one of the most formidable brands in the computer game industry under Infogrames’ control. Infogrames gains more than 250 new titles under the deal, with licensing access to 600 Hasbro franchises. Hasbro’s marques include Atari, MicroProse, and the Games.com domain. Infogrames also obtains a long-term licensing agreement with Hasbro Inc., giving the French publisher exclusive rights to publish interactive games based on current and future Hasbro properties.

Infogrames’ North American concerns include popular Macintosh game and utilities publisher MacSoft. Last summer, MacSoft entered into a thirteen title licensing deal with Hasbro Interactive which secured them rights to publish Mac versions of popular casual games like Scrabble, Jeopardy and Monopoly, among many others. It is unknown at this time as to how the merger of Hasbro Interactive into MacSoft’s parent company will affect future licensing plans, but all signs up until now have pointed to a positive outcome.

Calling Hasbro Interactive "an ideal partner," Infogrames chairman and CEO Bruno Bonnell said that the two companies’ shared vision made them a natural fit.

"The completion of the acquisition is extremely exciting for us, as it fits perfectly with our corporate strategy of building the premier publisher of digital interactive entertainment for the whole family," said Bonnell.

Hasbro Interactive is expected to utilize the Infogrames name and branding strategy immediately. More details about how the company will be integrated into Infogrames are expected to be provided in the coming weeks.

Rival Gamemaker Sees Sega Struggle with Other Boxes

Sega Corp will struggle if it decides to abandon production of its own game console in order to provide software for other platforms, a leading rival warned here on Tuesday.

Although Sega is recognized as a great game developer, the company would be handicapped by unfamiliarity with the programming requirements of rival consoles and the long development cycle for video games, the chief operating officer of Electronics Arts Inc. told Reuters.

‘‘It’s not quite as though this is GM saying we’ll make BMWs, but it’s the same kind of proposition," said John Riccitiello, president and chief executive of the rival gamemaker. ‘‘They may look like BMWs, but I doubt if they’ll drive like BMWs."

Industry analysts expect Sega to announce it will stop production of its loss-making Dreamcast game machine as soon as Wednesday, despite official denials from the struggling game maker.

Sega has said it is in talks to supply game software to its two major rivals -- Sony Corp, which makes the PlayStation 2, and Nintendo Co Ltd for its Gameboy Advance devices.

EA, the top game vendor for PlayStation 2 in the U.S., rose to become the No. 8 gamemaker for the console in Japan in 2000 and has its sights on becoming at least the fifth largest player in that market over the next few years, Riccitiello said.

Sega’s expected move would position the Japanese company as a more direct competitor to EA in the market for PlayStation games, but it would have to contend with the 18 to 30-month software development cycle that was standard in the industry, he said.

‘‘They’re starting from scratch," he said.

EA had a 35 percent market share in Europe in PlayStation 2 games at the end of December, but lacked a breakaway title like Madden NFL, the football game that became the best-selling offering for the console in the U.S. last year. Riccitiello also said sales of PlayStation 2, which ran into production delays after its March release, were hurt in Japan by the lack of compelling new games developed specifically for its enhanced capabilities.

‘‘There’s still yet to be a killer app," he said. ‘‘People don’t buy a game console as living room art, they buy it because they want to play games on it."

Sega’s Smash Pack Delivers Value Plus

Hours of Fun to Dreamcast Gamers

Limited Edition Sega Dreamcast Bundle Showcases 12 of the Greatest Sega Games Ever Made

Now, the Sega Dreamcast videogame console has even more to offer consumers than a great price, multi-player online gaming and 200 innovative titles! Segafi of America announced the ‘‘Smash Pack" Bundle which combines the powerful Dreamcast console with 12 of the greatest Sega games ever made -- all on one disc. The ‘‘Smash Pack" is currently available at the low price point of $179.95.

The ‘‘Smash Pack" bundle features over 80 hours of exciting gameplay including popular Sega characters from titles such as ‘‘Sonic the Hedgehog," ‘‘Vectorman," ‘‘Altered Beast," and the previously unreleased and highly anticipated Dreamcast version of Virtua Cop 2. The ‘‘Smash Pack" bundle has a genre for everyone including RPG, Action, Adventure, Puzzle, Shooter, Sports, and more. The complete list of titles in the ‘‘Smash Pack" is as follows:

* ‘‘Sonic the Hedgehog" -- The original adventure featuring Sega’s blue mascot takes players zooming through eight exciting zones.
* ‘‘Vectorman" -- Morph into a train, a drill, and a lightening fast dune buggy as you save Earth from the evil Warhead.
* ‘‘Altered Beast" -- Resurrected by Zeus himself, players assume the role of an ancient warrior that can transform into a ferocious beast and rescue Zeus’ daughter from the God of the Underworld.
* ‘‘Golden Axe" -- Team up with a friend to slash monsters, cast spells, and ride bizarre animals as you both attempt to save the kingdom!
* ‘‘Revenge of Shinobi" -- Deadly attacks and powerful ninja magic are on your side as you go up against the evil Neo Zeed army.
* ‘‘Streets of Rage 2" -- Players assume the role of four distinct characters, each with their own special moves, as they try to save Metro City from Mr. X’s gang.
* ‘‘Columns" -- This addictive and brilliant jewel-laden puzzle game will keep you coming back for more.
* ‘‘Phantasy Star 2" -- Considered a landmark title, gamers will be able to play the first RPG in the renowned ‘Phantasy Star’ series.
* ‘‘Shining Force" -- Knights, mages, dragons, archers, samurai and werewolves clash in the turn-based trailblazer that launched the legendary strategy-game series.
* ‘‘Wrestle War" -- Totally exclusive, bone crushing wrestling action straight out of Japan!
* ‘‘Sega Swirl" -- Don’t let Sega Swirl’s simple premise fool you, this one’s as addictive as they come.
* ‘‘Virtua Cop 2" -- Take on the crime syndicate and blast the bad guys in this action-packed thriller.

‘‘Sega has an incredible legacy of great content," said John Golden, director of product marketing, Sega of America. ‘‘Combining the appeal of these titles with a game system as powerful as the Dreamcast makes the Smash Pack an incredible value for consumers."

The ‘‘Smash Pack" Bundle will be available at all participating retailers in January for $179.95.

Phantasy Star Online, the First Global Online Console RPG, Lands On Sega Dreamcast

For the first time in history, a video game breaks all limitations of lanaguage and time to unite gamers on a global scale! Sega of America, Inc. announced the release of ‘‘Phantasy Star Online" for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast video game console. This multiplayer RPG allows thousands of players to interact, form teams and embark on mystical and monster-filled missions in real-time. Using a language converter and a special Internet clock, ‘‘Phantasy Star Online" delivers a world that is easy to navigate while interacting with friends from around the world. Created by world-renowned developer Yuji Naka, ‘‘Phantasy Star Online" expands on the ever-popular ‘‘Phantasy Star" franchise by sculpting the universe into a revolutionary online gaming experience.

Set in the future and utilizing elements of the legendary ‘‘Phantasy Star" series, ‘‘Phantasy Star Online" begins with a scout crew descending from space to investigate an explosion on the planet Ragol. By assuming the role of a fully customizable character -- including profession, race and appearance - players must unite in packs of four to solve the mystery of what triggered the explosion and what happened to the previous crew who had already arrived on the planet. This game can be played offline, online or both, with computer generated mission companions if necessary. ‘‘Phantasy Star Online" completely eliminates language barriers by using a universal translation system. This makes it possible for gamers from all over the world to play together seamlessly. Players choose from hundreds of pre-set phrases and sentences, which are then instantly translated into Japanese, English, Spanish, French, or German. Players can also communicate through the use of ‘‘Hot Keys," which are commonly used phrases or words pre-set on either the keyboard or controller.

‘‘Phantasy Star Online" runs on a universal time system that makes it easy for gamers to meet online. Using the ‘‘beat" time, created by Swatch, gamers will have no problem meeting for gameplay regardless of time zones or geographical borders. Beats eliminate time zones and geographical borders by dividing up the virtual and real day into 1000 ‘‘beats."

‘‘‘Phantasy Star Online’ is bringing the first truly global gaming experience to console players around the world," said John Golden, director of product marketing, Sega of America. ‘‘Breaking the barriers of language and time, and supporting thousands of players at a time, ’Phantasy Star Online’ delivers unlimited gaming possibilities."

‘‘Phantasy Star Online" supports the Dreamcast Keyboard, and is currently available at www.sega.com and at retailers nationwide for the suggested price of $49.99. The game is rated ‘‘T" for Teen.

Oni Ships For Mac, PC, PlayStation 2

Gathering of Developers has announced the release of Bungie Software’s long-awaited 3D action game Oni. The game has been released simultaneously for the Mac, PC and PlayStation 2. Gathering of Developers is publishing the game for the Mac and PC. Some gamers have been able to get their hands on the title early, as some resellers got their stock over the weekend and set out copies early.

In Oni, players assume the role of Konoko, a special agent on a mission to overthrow Boss Muro and his Syndicate, an organized crime ring that deals in illegal technology. The game is set in a sprawling metropolis of the near future, in a setting of environmental devastation and a government run amuck. It’s up to Konoko to discover what secrets her own shrouded past holds -- she’s not sure who she can trust or what the truth is, but she’ll find out.

Oni is a 3D action game rendered in a third-person perspective. Although the game superficially resembles other third-person action titles like the Tomb Raider series, which emphasizes platform jumping skills and other feats, Oni’s emphasis is on hand-to-hand combat between Konoko and her enemies. Players learn new combination moves and gain access to new and more powerful weapons as the game progresses. Alas, there’s no multiplayer mode for Oni -- it’s a single-player game only.

Gathering of Developers CEO Mike Wilson hopes that Oni will have widespread appeal both to hardcore gamers and to the gaming market at large.

"Bungie Software has created a stunning game that takes action/adventure to the next level and features a hard-core action heroine main character who breaks the stereotypical ’gaming babe’ mold," said Wilson.

System requirements for Oni call for a PowerPC-equipped Mac operating at 300MHz or faster; Mac OS 8 or higher (it’s Carbonized for OS X, as well); 64MB RAM; 800MB available HD space; 3dfx Voodoo2 or ATI RAGE Pro graphics card or better; CD-ROM. The game carries a suggested retail price of US$39.99. The game carries an ESRB rating of "T" for "Teen."

Rights to publish Oni were sold to Take Two Interactive Software last summer as part of Bungie Software’s acquisition by Microsoft. Take Two had owned a 19.9 percent share of Bungie prior to the acquisition. Gathering of Developers is a subsidiary of Take Two Interactive Software. Take Two subsidiary Rockstar Games is publishing Oni for the Sony PlayStation 2 video game console.

Square Ships DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S for the PlayStation2 Computer Entertainment System

The Game Marks Square’s U.S. Debut on the PlayStation2 Computer Entertainment System

Square Electronic announced the release of DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S is a driving simulation game that immerses players in the experience of high-performance sports car racing and is the first title from Square for the PlayStation 2. The game features detailed realistic recreations of over 40 fully licensed cars including those from such high-profile manufacturers as Porsche, Ferrari and Alfa Romeo.

‘‘DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S is a milestone title for Square as it marks our first endeavor on the PlayStation 2," said Jun Iwasaki, president of Square Electronic Arts. ‘‘We are thrilled to bring the SQUARESOFT name to the PlayStation 2 with a title that offers fast-paced action and stunning graphics."

DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S provides players with a complete sports racing

experience by accurately recreating the feeling of racing at top speeds. In addition to Porsche, Ferrari and Alfa Romeo, Square has garnered the rights to license cars from other manufacturers such as BMW, Honda, Mitsubishi, Subaru, Nissan, Mazda, Toyota and TVR. The featured cars include exact replications of the interior and exterior of the vehicles based on data from the manufacturers. This gives each car its own distinct look, handling characteristics and allows players to experience the true thrill of racing behind the wheel of such exotic cars as the Porsche Boxster S or the Ferrari 360 Modena.

Further enhancing the simulation experience, DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S features high-resolution graphics and accurate in-game physics that fully utilize the advanced processing capability of the PlayStation 2. The breathtaking graphics of the game include features such as surroundings reflected in the body of the car and a realistic glare of head and brake lights as diffused through the driver’s windshield view. During races, players experience physics that simulate precise handling and suspension techniques unique to each vehicle which are influenced by air, weight, gravity and resistance.

Players can select from four racing modes -- Arcade Type-S, Line Training, Time Attack, Versus Mode -- and can also select the Assist Level. Vehicles will perform and control very realistically in the Simulation level, while the Normal level will be more forgiving. Players can ultimately choose from ten different racetracks including real Japanese tracks like the Suzuka and Tsukuba circuits. All cars in the game feature fully customizable transmission, suspension and brakes that can be tailored according to preferred driving style. Players can also change the body color of selected vehicles before any race.

DRIVING EMOTION TYPE-S is compatible with the DUALSHOCK2 analog controller. The game carries a suggested retail price of U.S. $50 and an ESRB rating of ‘‘E" (Everyone).

THQ Ships ‘‘Championship Motocross 2001 Featuring Ricky Carmichael"

THQ Inc. announced the release of ‘‘Championship Motocross 2001 featuring Ricky Carmichael" for PlayStation.

Based on the growing sport of motocross and featuring the reigning 250cc National Outdoor Champion, Ricky Carmichael, ‘‘Championship Motocross 2001 featuring Ricky Carmichael" is now available at major retail outlets nationwide.

‘‘Ricky Carmichael dominated the 250cc class in the 2000 Outdoor National series with a record-setting nine wins," said Germaine Gioia, vice president, licensing, THQ. ‘‘We’re thrilled to see Ricky’s talent and popularity skyrocket and to be bringing the best in motocross racing and freestyle action to the millions of motocross fans and gamers looking for the definitive motocross experience on the PlayStation."

‘‘Championship Motocross 2001 featuring Ricky Carmichael" for PlayStation features 28 real motocross riders, including the sport’s top racers and freestylers: Mike Larocco, Jeff Emig, Greg Albertyn, Carey Hart, Mike Cinqmars and more. The game offers 24 tracks in motocross, supercross and freestyle including the National Outdoor Championship Series and the THQ U.S. Open.

With 3-D track environments and Funcom’s proprietary RMD+ physics system, ‘‘Championship Motocross 2001 featuring Ricky Carmichael" redefines the standard for motocross on the PlayStation by delivering realistic and responsive rider dynamics both on the ground and in the air.

‘‘Playing the game with the fans at the pro and amateur events over the past few months has been a blast," said Ricky Carmichael, who recently seized his fourth consecutive National Outdoor Championship title. ‘‘It’s awesome to see how well the game is doing and all the great things fans are saying about it."

THQ Ships "Action Man" for Game Boy Color

THQ Inc. announced it will release ‘‘ACTION MAN: SEARCH FOR BASE X" for GAME BOY Color on January 30.

Licensed by Hasbro Interactive, ‘‘ACTION MAN" toys and merchandise are a hit with kids after the debut of the ‘‘ACTION MAN" television show and toy line. Developed by Natsume, ‘‘ACTION MAN: SEARCH FOR BASE X" will be available on January 30 at major retail outlets nationwide.

‘‘‘ACTION MAN’ merchandise has exceeded $1 billion in retail sales worldwide in the last five years," stated Alison Locke, executive vice president, North American Publishing, THQ. ‘‘‘The ACTION MAN: SEARCH FOR BASE X’ missions are a perfect fit for the GAME BOY Color demographic."

‘‘The ’ACTION MAN’ product line has been wildly successful in Europe and we expect its appeal to our target demographic to be just as successful in the U.S.," said Tom Dusenberry, president and CEO, Hasbro Interactive. ‘‘THQ’s expertise in the handheld arena will make ’ACTION MAN: SEARCH FOR BASE X’ for GAME BOY Color the perfect compliment to our PC and PlayStation ’ACTION MAN’ adventures."

‘‘ACTION MAN: SEARCH FOR BASE X" for GAME BOY Color features seven levels with more than 15 missions for gamers to enjoy as they assume the role of the GREATEST HERO OF THEM ALL. As ‘‘ACTION MAN," players must find and arrest DR. X before he uses his top-secret weapon against the world.

‘‘ACTION MAN" can use devices such as his Electronic Magnetic Pulse, longbow, sonic explosions and flashlight to explore through missions including a jungle, a mine, a snow base and even a moon base.

‘‘ACTION MAN" is a realistic hero who pairs extraordinary athletic ability in extreme sports with superior intelligence and a sixth-sense called the AMP FACTOR to combat evil around the globe. The cutting-edge ‘‘ACTION MAN" CGI programming made its debut of weekly episodes on Fox Kids Network on Saturdays.

Wireless Playstation on the Horizon

The bestselling video-game system of all time may soon be coming to a cell phone near you.

In a bid to bring together i-mode wireless technology and the Playstation gaming juggernaut worldwide, Japanese telecom giant NTT DoCoMo and Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. signed separate agreements Monday with DoCoMo's six alliance partners to jointly develop and market mobile network services and applications that combine the two technologies.

Under the terms of the agreements, DoCoMo and Sony will share their service know-how with DoCoMo's partners, which will market the new services in their business domains in Europe, North America and Asia.

DoCoMo's partners include AT&T Wireless Group, Hutchison Telephone Company Limited, Hutchison 3G UK Limited, KG Telecommunications Co., Ltd, KPN Mobile N.V. and Telecom Italia Mobile.

The new agreements will build on an August alliance between DoCoMo and Sony to bring wireless Playstation to market in Japan.

In addition to developing a new network service to blend i-mode's and Playstation's technology, the companies said they will work to create an interface between mobile Internet devices and Playstation consoles, and to create an interface between Playstation, a gateway server and content providers' servers.

Such developments have the potential to let users play video games with each other using Internet-enabled wireless devices, especially as next-generation wireless technology revs up data speeds.

DoCoMo said it will encourage content providers to take advantage of the new service, with the goal of gradually expanding the content selection for users.

DoCoMo's i-mode technology has soared in popularity in Japan, signing up 17 million subscribers in just 22 months. The service offers users color screens, graphics, games and information services -- and analysts report it is leaving WAP (wireless application protocol), the more limited wireless standard now offered in the United States, in the dust.

Earlier this month, DoCoMo announced a three-party alliance with KPN Mobile and Telecom Italia Mobile, giving the company a foothold in Europe. I-mode will be launched later this year by KPN and Telecom Italia, DoCoMo said, targeting more than 30 million subscribers of the companies in Belgium, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands.

Sega to Provide Games to Palm Handhelds

Japanese video game maker Sega Corp. on Wednesday said it would develop games for Palm Inc.'s handheld computers by the end of the year.

Peter Moore, president and chief operating officer of Sega of America, said the games would likely be geared toward handheld devices with wireless connections, so that consumers can download games either on a pay-per-play basis or via subscription.

‘‘The quality of games has not been up to par recently...," Moore said in a conference call. ‘‘But once we start applying our development effort to bring characters like Sonic (the Hedgehog) to a Palm, I think you will see the business model open up immediately."

The company did not provide details on pricing or specific games for the Palm devices, saying only that more information would be released in coming weeks.

Sega made the announcement at the same time that it revealed it would move out of the hardware business by pulling the plug on its flagship Dreamcast video game console.

The game maker will stay in the software business, providing Sonic and other characters and games to platforms developed by its competitors, including Sony Corp.’s PlayStation 2.

Rival game software company Electronic Arts Inc. has said it will not focus on games for handheld computers.

U.S. sales of personal digital assistants, such as the popular Palm Pilot, more than doubled in 2000, according to industry data, in sharp contrast to slack growth in the personal computer market. Palm dominated with a market share of 78 percent in 1999, according to research firm NPD Intelect.

Sega’s Moore said Palm users will increasingly seek out compelling games for the handheld devices.

‘‘The ability to get quality games moving forward in either premium pay-for-play or a subscription-based model is becoming more relevant to that consumer," he said.

‘‘As a result, we are working on a business model that will allow Palm owners, particularly those that have a wireless connection, to be able to subscribe to something like ’Game of the Week."’

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft Attacks Antitrust Case, Judge’s Behavior

Microsoft on Monday filed final papers in its antitrust case appeal, saying its behavior had been lawful, the trial court judge biased and his order to split the company in two unjustified.

In a 75-page reply to a government filing earlier this month, the Redmond, Wash.-based software giant said it detected several concessions by the government that much of Microsoft’s behavior was lawful.

‘‘Whatever remains of plaintiffs’ case after these concessions does not amount to a Sherman Act violation, and is certainly not sufficient to justify breaking up Microsoft and imposing other extreme relief," Microsoft said.

Oral arguments are scheduled for Feb. 26-27.

District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson found that Microsoft holds monopoly power in the market for personal computer operating systems with its Windows product and illegally used that power, including integrating its Web-browser into Windows to combat Netscape.

On June 7, Jackson ordered that the company be broken up to prevent future antitrust violations and set other remedies, all of which he suspended pending appeal.

The U.S. Department of Justice, 19 states and the District of Columbia have asked the appeals court to uphold Jackson's findings and the split order.

Microsoft said Jackson should be reversed entirely, but that if any matters remained, Jackson should be removed from the case because of his extraordinary comments about the proceedings.

''The district judge's public comments about the merits of the case...are indefensible," Microsoft said.

The company took particular offense at Jackson's comparison of Microsoft with gangland killers, according to a new book about the Microsoft case by an author who spent time with the judge during and after the trial.

In Monday's filing, the company also quoted portions of the government's Jan. 12 filing in an effort to back its argument that it legally integrated its Internet Explorer browser into Windows. The appeals court questioned the role of the judiciary in designing software when it sided with the company in a related case in 1998.

''The district court specifically found aspects of Microsoft's conduct in developing a Web browser and offering it to OEMs (original equipment makers, i.e. computer makers) and users with Windows to be lawful," was one of the government's sentences that Microsoft highlighted.

But a look at the Jan 12. filing showed the government distinguishing between legal product changes and illegal behavior, prefacing the sentence noted by Microsoft with: ''The court distinguished between lawful pro-competitive design changes and anti-competitive actions relating to design features."

The government had wanted the Supreme Court to directly hear the company's appeal, but the high court sided with Microsoft and sent the case to the lower appellate court.

A Justice Department spokeswoman declined to comment on Microsoft's latest filing.

How forcefully the new Republican administration of President George W. Bush will pursue the Microsoft case is still unclear. Attorney General-designate John Ashcroft told nomination hearings this month he would look carefully at the case and rely on the expertise of the Justice Department.

In any case, the states have said they plan to vigorously pursue the case all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.

Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller said Monday he looked forward to oral

argument. ‘‘We stand by our brief and Judge Jackson’s conclusion that Microsoft violated state and federal antitrust laws, thwarted competition, and harmed consumers," he said.

AOL Spam Smells Like Scam

Many America Online subscribers received bogus e-mail on Friday informing them that they may have won a prize from the giant Internet service provider, and asking them to enter their screen name and password.

The world’s largest ISP said that it certainly was not behind the e-mail, which told users "Congratulations (You’ve Won)," and linked them to a Web page that appeared to be an AOL site, complete with an e-mail address for AOL Time Warner chairman Steve Case.

The page included the AOL logo and features such as "AOL Net Find" and "My News," but the e-mail address to Case was not functional.

AOL is reportedly investigating the origin of the e-mails, whose sender is listed as "Wooouuuu." The company did not say how many AOL users received the e-mail or how many responded and volunteered the requested personal information.

Users who proceeded to the e-mail’s linked page saw the message: "Dear AOL Member, We at AOL are now selecting random users to win prizes, and you were one that we picked, we pick 10 members each month! To claim your prize, just fill in the information below!"

Filling in a screen name and password led to another Web page, which had an Ad Council banner advertisement for Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., reading, "Your information has been received."

The last page also included a link to the "Free Webmasters Resource," which led in turn to DK3.com, a Danish Web resources company.

AOL stressed its message to users that the company will never ask members for passwords or billing information. AOL users are repeatedly told on e-mail and other AOL screens that they should not give out their passwords.

The company, which is not running any kind of random-selection prize program, was unsure how many AOL users had responded to the bogus e-mail, which may turn out to be a scam aimed at getting subscriber information or access to AOL accounts.

AOL has come under fire in the past for the amount of spam -- unsolicited commercial e-mail -- that its users receive. While it is unclear whether any criminal charges might emerge from Friday’s e-mailing, there have been a number of cases in which the line between spam and scam has become blurred.

A recent e-mail hoax claimed Microsoft would pay users US$5 per forwarded e-mail message in a test of the software giant’s e-mail tracking system. Microsoft denied it, calling the Internet chain letter campaign a spam promotion.

And instances still exist of the "Good Times" e-mail, which began hitting

inboxes as far back as 1994. The hoax message tells users about a virus on AOL called "Good Times," adding that the message should be forwarded to friends as a warning.

While the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) readily admits it cannot stop spam, which could constitute a violation of free speech, the commission has indicated that it will work with law enforcement to aggressively pursue and prosecute cases of fraud resulting from illicit e-mail.

In a report issued earlier this month, the FTC said it has facilitated legal action against hundreds of Internet scam artists who use e-mail, as well as direct mail and faxes, in their plots to defraud Web surfers.

EBay to Hide Member E-Mail Addresses

Online auction house eBay Inc. will soon start concealing the e-mail addresses of its customers, making it more difficult for junk-mail senders to harvest the information.

The new system also will make it harder for users to wrap up their deals outside eBay - and lock the company out of its fees. A new warning will pop up about such deals, which are prohibited by the company.

Ebay receives hundreds of complaints each week from customers who receive unsolicited e-mail, or spam, after using the online bidding system, spokesman Kevin Pursglove said Thursday.

‘‘It’s one of the biggest sources of complaints that we get," he said.

Anyone registered on the site can currently view e-mail addresses by clicking on a seller’s or bidder’s username. Registration is free and takes only a few minutes to complete.

Under the new system, to be deployed over the next few weeks, users who want to contact buyers or sellers will only see the recipient’s username. They will enter their message in a form, rather than send their own e-mail message.

‘‘That message will be sent to the recipient, but the sender will not see the recipient’s e-mail address," Pursglove said.

Though the company’s computers are automatically forwarding the e-mail, eBay will not monitor the content of the messages, he said. And any replies to the original message will contain the sender’s address.

‘‘At that point, it is the decision of the recipient to disclose their e-mail address," Pursglove said.

The new policy was receiving mixed reviews on Internet message boards. Some suggested making the policy optional. Others feared what would happen should the company’s e-mail servers crash.

‘‘How reliable is their e-mail forwarding system going to be?" asked one user on the AuctionWatch discussion board. ‘‘I don’t want e-mails that were sent an hour before the auction closed to be delivered 10 minutes after it closed."

Senator Introduces Strong Internet-Privacy Bill

Senator John Edwards re-introduced a bill on Monday that would require Web sites to get permission from visitors before tracking their movements online.

The North Carolina Democrat's bill stakes out an aggressive position in the debate over Internet privacy, requiring Web sites to reveal their use of technology that commonly runs in the background without the knowledge of the visitor.

The bill was first introduced last October. It has no co-sponsors.

Many commercial Web sites place a piece of computer code, or "cookie," on the hard drives of visitors, allowing them to be tracked as they browse the site.

Observers say Congress will pass some sort of bill protecting Internet privacy rights this year.

Most other bills that have been introduced focus on misuse of personally identifiable data, such as phone numbers and zip codes, collected from Web surfers, and do not address the use of cookies.

Edwards' bill would require Web sites to first get permission from visitors befo
re
using cookies or other tracking technologies.

Businesses would be required to disclose what information they gather, allow visitors to view and correct the data, and safeguard the information from unauthorized access.

''This legislation is a reasonable way to help Americans regain some of their lost privacy," Edwards said in a statement. "We must find ways to keep confidential personal records confidential."

U.S. Launches Fraud-Fighting Web Site

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) unveiled a new Web site Monday designed to educate consumers on the prevalence of online fraud and theft.

The "Consumer Sentinel" Web site will offer information compiled from over 300,000 consumer complaints that have been lodged with the FTC. Approximately 80 public and private organizations have already contributed this data to the Web site's underlying database. Contributors include the Better Business Bureau (BBB), the National Consumer League and the United States Postal Inspection Service, as well as several international agencies.

"There's strength in numbers," said Jodie Bernstein, who directs the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. "We hope consumers will find the site informative and helpful."

According to the FTC, the new Web site has already partnered with 250 U.S. and international law enforcement agencies. Consumers will also be able to access the new site to determine whether their local law enforcement agencies are associated with Consumer Sentinel and to file complaints about any online crime, such as fraud or identity theft, perpetrated against them.

In addition to providing hard data on computer crime, the Web site breaks down the information by region, cost and frequency of occurrence, and the location of companies most frequently cited as being responsible for such violations.

The FTC's press release unveiled some startling information about online identity theft. The agency found, from statistics compiled for the year 2000, that while only 12 percent of victims of identity theft admitted to having a personal relationship with the perpetrator, a whopping 62 percent had at least some knowledge of the identity thief.

"This [Consumer Sentinel] site will let consumers in on fascinating data about fraud and deception, including the latest fraud trends, specific scams, dollars spent, and information about how to recognize and avoid fraud and deception," said Bernstein.

iDefense's director of special intelligence projects, Ben Venzke, told NewsFactor Network that "one of the key things for consumers is knowing and understanding what fraud looks like or how a scam feels, because many of them look similar and have similar characteristics."

"If someone walked up to you on the street wearing a trench coat holding dozens of [Rolex] watches and told you he was selling them for US$20 apiece, you're going to know that it's a scam," Venzke told NewsFactor. "People don't seem to have that sort of street-savvy yet on the Internet, though they're developing it at a rapid pace."

Consequently, Venzke believes the real value in Web sites such as the FTC's lies in their ability to increase public awareness and provide consumers with a place to go if something doesn't feel quite right. There, Venzke added, a consumer may access the Web site and see if the offer fits the descriptions of other scams.

However, Venzke noted that Web sites such as the FTC's also require consumers to take the initiative in doing the research. In today's fast-paced world, people often don't have the time or the willingness to do so. Scam artists know this, and take advantage of it.

"We're so determined and so eager to get a good deal that we often overlook obvious warning signals, putting scam artists right up there with top marketers in determining consumer needs," Venzke concluded.

Sweepstakes Site Awards Its Last Prize

Sweepstakes site AllAdvantage.com has shuttered its Web site, joining the list of failed businesses littering the dot-com landscape.

Hayward, Calif.-based AllAdvantage said on its Web site that it has pulled programs that paid people to surf the Internet--thereby ensuring they viewed advertisements--because "the advertising and capital markets have

changed so fundamentally that it is now impossible to continue our infomediary incentive programs and benefits."

AllAdvantage's site said the company will not sell, lease, distribute or disclose personal information to third parties. Sweepstakes winners and members who have reached the payment threshold will be paid.

AllAdvantage could not immediately be reached for comment.

Since it was founded in 1999, AllAdvantage had sought to offer daily sweepstakes, promotions or cash to Web surfers who allowed the company to collect personal data about their online shopping habits and who used its Web browser. Advertisers then paid the company to reach people interested in their products.

Although many sweepstakes Web sites received a big boost in Web traffic in September 2000, AllAdvantage had become plagued by difficulties by the end of the year. Nielsen/NetRatings said the number of visitors to AllAdvantage's Web site significantly dropped; traffic in June hit 2 million visitors but fell about 266 percent by December to 547,000 visitors.

The company went through several rounds of layoffs in the past year. AllAdvantage cut 150 employees, or about 35 percent of its 230-person work force, in November. In July and August, the company shed nearly 160 employees in efforts to trim expenses.

As recently as October, AllAdvantage said its business model was sound. Analysts, however, were unfazed by the company's demise.

"I'm not surprised" about the shutdown, said Christopher Todd, an analyst at Jupiter Media Metrix. "I think we saw it coming for quite some time."

To avoid being swept into the dot-com downdraft, Todd said sweepstakes sites must focus their efforts on serving advertisers as well as consumers. By paying people to surf, analysts said companies such as AllAdvantage were working from a shaky business model.

"Magazines don't pay people to read a magazine," Todd said. "They charge people because paying people to look at advertising is not necessarily an effective model."

Napster To Start Charging

Internet music business Napster Inc. plans to start charging subscription fees by June or July this year, Bertelsmann AG chairman Thomas Middelhoff said Monday.

''We carried out market research among 20,000 Napster users. The willingness to pay is given," the head of the Germany media company said during the World Economic Forum in Davos

Bertelsmann, parent of the BMG music unit, signed a watershed cooperation deal with Napster in October. It's trying to bring the Internet music site together with other players in the industry in an effort to legitimatize the popular Web site.

Earlier this month, independent record label TVT Records announced it was dropping its lawsuit against Napster, becoming the second such record label to do so after Bertelsmann itself.

However, much of the world’s recording industry remains at loggerheads with Napster, a web site where registered users can swap music files free of charge.

The industry says the Napster model is a breach of copyright and results in a loss of royalties for the artists and the recording companies.

By changing to subscriptions, however, Napster runs the risk of losing its users to other online companies that continue to provide music exchange at no charge.

Napster is in talks to enlist other record companies, including the four other majors Sony, EMI Group, Warner Music and Universal.

The Redwood, Calif.-based Napster claims millions of users, including 1.6 million users online at any one time.

Analyst Eric Scheirer of Cambridge, Mass.- based Forrester Research said the plan had potential, but a few things need to be worked out first.

‘‘There are people that are ready to pay out there," Scheirer said. However, he said Bertelsmann would need to offer more than simply BMG artist content to convert Napster users to a paid service solution. Titles from all labels would need to be included among the selections to make the endeavor a success.

‘‘Music fans really want the opportunity to choose from the entire body of recorded music," Scheirer said. ‘‘If we want to raise the price we’re going to have to raise the opportunity."

Napster officials did not immediately respond to a phone call seeking comment.

Gnutella Spreading Itself Thin

Slow downloads and sign in procedures that only a true geek would understand have put a damper on what could have been a monster success story.

Predictions that Gnutella would quickly offer an effective file-swapping alternative to Napster have proven premature, with the technology’s own developers admitting more work is needed before it will take off as a way to trade free music and other digital wares.

Complaints of slow downloads and relatively complicated sign-up procedures have dampened enthusiasm for Gnutella, which is still waiting for major fixes after nine months in the open-source development tank. By contrast, Napster’s popularity has continued to explode despite the threat of a court-ordered shutdown that could put it out of business any day. That decision has been stayed since late July pending an appeal.

"Gnutella is not for mainstream users who don’t understand what an IP address is," said Ric Dube of digital music industry watcher Webnoize.

"Lack of speed only discourages a person once they figure out how to use it. But first they have to figure out how to use it."

With Napster hogging the file-sharing spotlight even as the clock ticks down on its legal status, Gnutella developers are rattling the cage with new releases and the promise of a major upgrade.

Complicating the software program's future is a development effort that has branched down several different paths. Two updates were announced last week for two separate variations, for example, although neither promises to solve the stickiest problems facing the so-called peer-to-peer system.

Recent new arrivals include Bearshare, a Windows Gnutella client that was unleashed Wednesday. Its developers say the new version reduces, but does not solve, traffic jams on the network.

Gnotella 0.93, meanwhile, made its debut Tuesday, adding graphics to watch the progress of file transfers, a temporary download directory, and bandwidth throttling to help ease network jams.

Far bigger advances are promised soon in still another version of the software, although no release date has been set.

J.C. Nicholas of GnutellaWorld said his coterie of computer whiz kids have solved the application's slow-to-a-crawl network speed and the steeplechase it takes to use the application.

Long on hype, but short on specifics, Nicholas promises the "Internet earthquake" that he's calling Gnutella2 to be out "soon."

The file-swapping community has been down this blind alley before. When it first was introduced, Gnutella's hype far outshined its performance. By some estimates the file-swapping program that says it's bulletproof from any copyright lawsuits has been downloaded about 1 million times. Compare that to Napster's 50 million clients sitting on computer hard drives.

Even Gnutella fans say the technology is maddeningly slow to use, with slower computers on the network dragging on download and search speeds. Trying to get onto the network involves knowing more about computers and the Internet in particular than most in the mainstream can bear.

For a few days in July, it appeared the software program was going to be the dominant file-swapping force, when a judge ordered that Napster be shut down. Downloads picked up at the various Gnutella sites. But the momentum died July 28, when a higher court lifted the injunction against Napster.

Nicholas said his group is about to change all that.

"We are looking for an Internet earthquake that will bring a whole new view of the Internet, and a lot of good for humanity," Nicholas wrote in a series of e-mails.

He said his team of developers is readying its first upgrade, which apparently comes with an even bigger dose of bravado than before.

"I think this is going to be one of the greatest revolutions since Linux," Nicholas wrote. "It will revolutionize the way we exchange information on the Internet."

Nicholas wouldn’t reveal just how Gnutella2 has managed to deal with slower computers on the network. But others in the Gnutella community speculate it involves limiting the number of messages going around the network, which at times takes up to 60 percent of the bandwidth.

Some developers have suggested, as well, that Gnutella could use software already available to create "super peers" for those slower computers. The "super peer" would serve as a proxy on the network for the slower computers. The computers would still get what they want but not act as speed bumps.

Nicholas wrote that Gnutella2 will tackle another pitfall: being able to expand.

"Right now, the problem with Gnutella is its scalability," Nicholas wrote. "We are working on a Gnutella that could support 20 million people and more."

Nicholas said Gnutella2 will also include a plug-in that will borrow the spare hard drive space of computers in the network and turn the collective into a supercomputer.

The practice is known as "distributed computing." Its poster child is SETI@home, which is run by the Search For Extraterrestrial Intelligence. SETI@home is a plug-in that sits on an individual’s computer. When the computer isn’t in use, the plug-in will borrow the hard drive space to analyze radar data.

But it’s eternal life, not extraterrestrial life, that Gnutella will search for. Gnutella has three other projects in mind, the first to sift through existing research to find out what causes cell death, Nicholas says.

Two things Gnutella doesn’t have to improve are its hype and its swagger.

Gnutella is perhaps the only major outlaw file-swapping player left standing without being tethered somehow to the Recording Industry Association of America or some of its members. Napster and media monolith Bertelsmann, which owns one of the five record companies suing Napster for piracy, have reached an agreement. They will drop their part of the lawsuit if Napster turns itself into a pay-for-use model.

Scour Exchange shut down and filed for bankruptcy protection after it was sued by the motion picture and recording industries over its file-sharing service.

Other pioneers, such as MP3.com, have also reached agreements with the record labels. The company has paid more than $150 million to the RIAA to settle a series of copyright infringement lawsuits and in exchange got licensing agreements.

Although some services are dancing with record companies, Nicholas writes that Gnutella2 is going to make the record companies angrier still.

"The music industry is really scared that digital music becomes uncontrollable. Obviously, people want it free," Nicholas writes. "The music industry has to find another business model. If they don’t react quickly, they may be dead by next year."

Apple Ships PowerBook G4

Apple product marketing VP Phil Schiller told financial analysts on Wednesday that the company is now shipping its new PowerBook G4 laptops, and that it's on track to ship its 667MHz and 733MHz Power Mac G4 systems by the end of February. Those were two highlights of the semiannual meeting, which also featured a presentation by CEO Steve Jobs. The laptops have been shipping since Monday, Apple said.

Jobs kicked off the meeting by repeating many points he made during his keynote at Macworld Expo. He discussed the new PowerBook G4 and Power Mac G4 systems, as well as iTunes, iDVD and Mac OS X. He also touted Apple's vision of the "digital lifestyle," with the Mac serving as a hub for a new generation of digital appliances.

In a Q&A session with analysts, Jobs made the following observations:

* Asked when the new SuperDrive might be included in the iMac product line, Jobs said he expected this might happen in 2002. "We need to make more of them and get the costs down," he said. He added that the iDVD software bundled with the SuperDrive is very consumer-friendly. "It's usable by pros as well, but consumers will use it," he said.

* Jobs expects that some of Apple's PC competitors will eventually offer the SuperDrive in their own systems, but he said that Apple will be the largest supplier, and maintained that its rivals will have a tough time developing the software needed to use the product. "The software is harder to replicate than the hardware," Jobs said. "This is hard stuff to do." Touting Apple's engineering resources, he noted that the company has about 1,000 people each in software and hardware development. "We have tremendous depth of talent," he said.

* Jobs said the company's "Digital Lifestyle" vision, while "very important" to consumers, also has appeal for professional users. For example, the company's Final Cut Pro software, designed for use with DV camcorders, primarily appeals to professionals. Although iTunes has largely consumer appeal, he noted that the Mac dominates the professional recording industry. Ad agencies and other creative users, he said, are excited about the new iDVD software because it allows them to put client presentations on DVD media. Those who need to create commercial DVD products, he said, can use the new DVD Studio Pro software.

* Jobs blamed most of the company's recent financial woes on the slowing economy. "We don't know what macroeconomic hand we're going to be dealt this year," he said. "We'll have to play the hand we're dealt." He noted that most of Apple's PC competitors are also seeing revenue shortfalls. "In my opinion, we're just beginning to see the ripple of that," he said, noting that Apple

has begun to cut expenses in some areas. Working in Apple's favor, he said, are its loyal customer base and the large number of professional Mac users, which Apple--with its latest hardware--is counting on to make up a bigger percentage of sales in 2001.

* Asked what Apple is doing to attract more Wintel users, Jobs said the company is trying to provide "the most aggressive products we can," notably the new PowerBook, which he said has already attracted some Wintel users, even in the corporate market. But he said that in the current market climate, Apple and other PC makers will be focusing primarily on increasing sales to the installed base.

* Jobs declined to comment on reports that Apple plans to open a retail chain. "I can't talk about initiatives we haven't announced yet," he said. "You'll hear if we have anything to announce in that regard."

* Reiterating a point he's made earlier, Jobs said that the transition to Mac OS X will take about a year and follow a bell curve, with some applications and early adopters coming on board in the spring, followed by a large number in the summer and some stragglers in the fall. As for when people should switch to the new OS, Jobs said "there is not one answer," suggesting that users wait until their most-critical applications have been Carbonized. This will be day one for some customers, spring for more and summer for most, he said. "It depends on the portfolio of apps they use."

* Asked about Apple's pricing strategy in the face of aggressive pricing by PC competitors, Jobs said that Mac products, with their high level of innovation and added value, will naturally cost more than many competing products. "It costs a little more to build a better product, but our customers have signalled to us that that's the product they want to buy," he said. "We believe we're delivering far superior products and with more innovation."

* Asked about the prospects for the G4 Cube, Jobs said that the Cube has found a market among high-end consumers "who care about design and want a product that is quiet, small and beautiful in their living environments." Most Cubes are being used in the home, and a high percentage of customers also buy a flat-panel display. However, he said the Cube market was smaller than Apple anticipated when it first developed the product.

* Jobs said that Apple is looking at the market for Internet appliances, but he said that companies in this space face some enormous challenges. For example, with their limited storage and expandability, he said, digital appliances are not easily adapted to new Web technologies. "You might be able to get three-fourths of the Web sites today, but it may decline to half by next year and a third by the year after that," he said. The PC, he said, "is a pretty tough competitor to these devices." Answering another question along the same lines, he said it's "too premature to give a yea or nay."

* Asked if Apple plans to develop new Internet applications, Jobs said that iTunes is a good example of one. Users, he said, have been "blinded into thinking that the browser is the same as the Internet." He noted that e-mail, not browsing, is the most popular Internet application. "The browser is lousy for e-mail," he said. "You can think of iTunes the same way," allowing access to Internet content through a specialized interface rather than a browser.

* As Apple previously announced, only the 533MHz model is available in a dual-processor version, but Schiller said that MP configurations of the 667MHz and 733MHz systems will appear when the chips are in greater supply. In some cases, he said, users with MP-optimized applications will get better performance from the dual 533MHz system than a single-processor 733MHz system. MP performance will improve even more, he said, under Mac OS X.

* Software engineering chief Avie Tevanian and OS X product manager Ken Bereskin provided an overview of Mac OS X, covering much of the same ground that Jobs covered in his Macworld Expo keynote. Tevanian said the OS is on track to ship on March 24. Later, during a Q&A session, he said that Apple has doubled the number of paid, registered Mac developers during the past year, indicating a great deal of developer interest in the new OS.

* Operations VP Tim Cook told the analysts that the percentage of first-time Mac buyers in the company's customer base is higher in Europe and Japan than in the U.S. As a result, Apple plans to increase the number of "touch points" (retail opportunities) for Mac products overseas. However, in the U.S., Apple will focus this year on improving the quality of the buying experience, he said. In some cases, this will mean cutting channel partners who are not providing a good experience, while increasing in other areas. He added that Apple is now taking aggressive steps to improve its standing in the education market, noting that education sales stabilized between Q4 2000 and Q1 2001. Apple plans to place a greater emphasis on selling "solutions"--hardware/software bundles--rather than "boxes," which have lower profit margins. Apple also plans to boost its online sales efforts overseas; Cook noted that 90 percent of Apple Store sales come from the U.S.

* Chief financial officer Fred Anderson discussed Apple's challenges during the past year, covering the megahertz gap, inventory problems, slow Cube sales and difficulty in the education market. He repeated his projection that Apple will turn a profit in the current quarter, and expects to see progressively increasing profits and revenues in Q3 and Q4. The company's goal is to build gross margins--the amount earned on each Mac sale--to more than 25 percent, eventually raising this to 27 percent. Short-term, Apple also wants to rebuild its revenue base to or above $1.5 billion per quarter, or $6 billion per year,

he said, increasing this further to $2 billion per quarter over the next 12 to 18 months. Apple plans to increase investments in strategic areas and does not anticipate across-the-board layoffs, he said, but may cut expenses in other areas, such as travel and cell phone use. "We don't want to mortgage the future," he said. "Because we are an innovator, our most im! portant resource is our talent."

* Asked about what steps Apple might take to prevent the kind of channel inventory glut it saw last year, Anderson said that the circumstances around Apple's problems were unique: Apple, he said, had made numerous product announcements, including a new product line (the Cube) at a time when the economy was slowing and the company was facing other challenges. Earlier, Cook said he wanted to further reduce channel inventory to four weeks from the current five-and-a-half, but that this will take several quarters.

* Asked for his views on the economy in general, Anderson noted that he's not an economist, but studied it in school, prompting laughter from the analysts. He noted that while the Federal Reserve has cut interest rates, it typically takes several months for this to have an impact on the economy. However, he doesn't foresee a deep recession, predicting that the economy will see an uptick this October.

The event featured some technical difficulties, as Jobs had trouble controlling a PowerPoint presentation, prompting several requests to a technician named Wayne. Asked by an analyst if Wayne would still have a job on Thursday, Jobs quipped that he would--but not if the glitches had happened during the Macworld Expo keynote.

Microsoft Phasing Out Windows 95

For Windows 95, the end is here.

Microsoft has taken steps to ensure that Windows 95 will become an asterisk in terms of sales. One of Microsoft's most popular products among both consumers and businesses, the operating system is still in use at many corporations today.

The licenses that let most computer makers incorporate the OS in new computers expired Dec. 31. As a result, Dell Computer and other computer makers no longer install the OS on new computers except under special circumstances.

"Beginning January 01, 2001, Dell is no longer licensed to factory install Windows 95," states an "end of life" notice on Dell's Web site.

In addition, Microsoft is not offering the OS under new volume licensing agreements that it sells directly to medium-sized to large businesses, according to company representatives. The only place that the OS is still being sold is in the "original equipment manufacturers' distribution channel," the network of distributors, dealers and small manufacturers. However, sales have dwindled.

"Windows 95 is definitely a legacy, discontinued program. None of the systems coming from the manufacturers has Windows 95 anymore. Everything has either Windows 2000 or 98," said Mark Romanowski, vice president of services for Long Island City, N.Y.-based dealer Jade Systems.

Still, Romanowski added, it’s not impossible to obtain the OS. "We may blow (the pre-installed operating systems) away and put in Windows 95 or NT 4, if that’s what the customer wants and they’re uncomfortable with Windows 2000," he said.

Even then, anyone who has purchased a copy of Windows 95 through a dealer or even a Windows 95 computer from a small manufacturer has had to http://www.microsoft.com/windows95/support/faq/availsupport.asp pay for technical support calls since last fall. With Windows 98, a customer gets two free calls from Microsoft and often more from the dealer.

Windows 95 has been one of Microsoft’s most successful OS releases. The company released the software with a worldwide marketing frenzy in the summer of 1995. TV ads pulsing to the haggard Rolling Stones hit "Start Me Up" flooded the airwaves. Lighted images of Microsoft’s logo were projected upon skyscrapers. A virtual army of golf shirt-clad Microsoft employees were dispersed globally to distribute copies to computer fans who lined up at midnight to buy copies of it.

To some degree, the OS lived up to its hype and created a more enhanced Internet experience. And in a relatively short time, it became a standard operating system for corporate computers.

"If you look at Windows 95, it was a quantum leap in difference in technological capability and stability," Gartner analyst Neil MacDonald said.

Phasing out products, even ones that enjoyed a brief status as a pop culture phenomenon like Windows 95, is part of the tech landscape. Windows 95 doesn’t work with a number of new devices coming on the market, so its exit from the market is inevitable.

Nonetheless, the decision to phase it out contains a financial motive for Microsoft, MacDonald said. The company wants customers to upgrade to Windows 2000, the OS for business computers released last year that is designed to replace Windows 95 as the business OS of choice.

Windows 2000 adoption has been slower than anticipated. With Microsoft making Windows 95 difficult to obtain, customers will naturally gravitate toward Windows 2000, or at least toward Windows 98, he said.

Microsoft uses other methods to encourage customers to shift as well, MacDonald said. Microsoft Office 10, the company’s latest application package, is not compatible with Windows 95, he said. Microsoft also will not provide bug fixes after Dec. 31 of this year, which encourages migration.

"If you are a business, it becomes a risk-management decision when a vendor says that they won’t provide anymore bug fixes or security fixes," MacDonald said.

People really burning for Windows 95, of course, can get it. Dell, for instance, will sell the OS through its custom integration service. To get that service, though, customers must order at least 25 PCs, said Dell

spokeswoman Anne Camden. Dell also charges an additional fee for burning in the custom software.

Dell, however, will not "support," or provide consultation or troubleshooting, on Windows 95 installed on machines bought after Dec. 31 of last year. For help, customers will need to call Microsoft, which will charge for the call.

Customers with licensing agreements for Windows 95 signed before the end of last year can also continue to buy the OS as permitted by the contract.

The legacy of Windows 95 can be seen in Microsoft’s balance sheets. The OS jump-started years of growing revenue and profits for Microsoft and introduced computing to millions. Ironically, the OS also contributed to the feeling of anticlimax that grips the company today. Simply put, Windows 98, Windows Me and some other successors have not been as impressive. Customers aren’t upgrading just to get the new OS.

"There is not a whole lot of difference between Windows 95 and Windows 98 and Windows 98 and Windows Me," MacDonald said. "How many bells and whistles can you continue to add before no one cares?"

Computer Virus Says ’Hey You’ to AOL Users

A password-stealing virus that says "hey you" instead of ‘‘I love you" hit users of AOL’s Internet service, a software security firm said on Thursday.

Software security firm McAfee.com Corp. said on Thursday the virus, which it said spreads through e-mail and installs itself on users’ systems, posed a ‘‘medium-risk" for AOL users, and cautioned them to be careful with attachments to e-mails.

‘‘The most virulent strain, ‘‘APStrojan.qa," spreads through email and installs itself on users’ systems, while attempting to steal AOL version 4.0 and 5.0 user account names and passwords, and forward them," said Mcafee.com in a statement. ‘‘It then attempts to replicate itself to active AOL screen names listed in the infected user’s Buddy List," it added, referring to AOL’s system for users to store frequently used e-mail addresses.

‘‘We take the report seriously and are clearly monitoring the situation but we haven’t seen a significant increase in the number of users hit," AOL spokesman Andrew Weinstein said.

He said it’s a known virus and has been around for about a year. ‘‘Our top priority is to protect our users and we do that by educating them about how to keep them secure from trojans and viruses."

Last May, the ‘‘love bug" hit millions of computers around the world, enticing e-mail recipients to open e-mail attachments with the phrase ‘‘I love you."

There were no available details on how many AOL users were hit by the ‘‘hey you" message. AOL said it was not taking any extraordinary precautionary measures.

While variants of the virus have been circulating for nearly a year, McAfee.com said it has recently noticed an increase in infected computers by users who are scanning their personal computers at the McAfee.com site.

This virus may be received by email as an attachment named "mine.zip," with a size of 77,855 bytes and with the subject line ‘‘hey you," Mcafee.com said.

The copy within the email forwarded reads, ‘‘hey I finally got my pics scanned...theres like 5 or 6 of them...so just download it and unzip it ... and for you people who don’t know how to then scroll down ... tell me what you think of my pics OK?"

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